

1 1.(Currently Amended) A method of distributing image prints printed on a plurality
2 of printers to a plurality of recipients, the method comprising:
3 receiving an order specifying ~~one or more~~ a plurality of recipients and, for each specified
4 recipient, a set of one or more images associated with that recipient; and
5 for each recipient specified by the order, separating the images associated with the
6 recipient into at least one printable unit of images to generate a contiguous run of prints for the
7 recipient.

1 2.(Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising, for each printable unit,
2 selecting a printer on which to print the printable unit.

1 3. (Original) The method of claim 2 further comprising, for each printable unit, printing
2 at least one copy of each image in the printable unit on the selected printer.

1 4.(Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each image has associated print
2 parameters.

1 5.(Original) The method of claim 4 wherein the images in a printable unit of images
2 have print parameters that allow the printable unit to be continuously printed.

1 6. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein images in a first recipient's image set
2 differ from images in a second recipient's image set.

1 7. (Original) The method of claim 4 wherein print parameters of a first recipient's
2 image set differ from print parameters of a second recipient's image set.

1 8. (Original) The method of claim 7 wherein print parameters include one or more of
2 print size, number of copies, and/or print finish.

1 9. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein print parameters differ among images
2 within an image set.

1 10. (Original) The method of claim 9 wherein print parameters include one or more of
2 print size, number of copies, and/or print finish.

1 11. (Original) The method of claim 1 wherein each image set comprises an arbitrary
2 grouping of images designated by a user.

1 12. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising, for each recipient, separating
2 the images associated with the recipient into one or more sub-orders.

1 13. (Original) The method of claim 12 wherein separating the images associated with the
2 recipient into at least one printable unit of images includes, for each sub-order, separating the
3 images associated with the sub-order into one or more sub-batches, each sub-batch representing a
4 printable unit.

1 14. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein the images in a sub-batch have print
2 parameters that allow the sub-batch to be continuously printed.

1 15. (Original) The method of claim 13 wherein a plurality of orders is received, the
2 images associated with each recipient specified in each order are divided into at least one sub-
3 order, and each sub-order is divided into at least one sub-batch.

1 16. (Original) The method of claim 15 further comprising assembling at least one batch
2 including one or more sub-batches, wherein each sub-batch can be continuously printed on the
3 same type of printer.

1 17. (Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the images in a batch have print
2 parameters that allow the batch to be continuously printed.

1 18.(Original) The method of claim 16 wherein the at least one batch includes sub-
2 batches from two or more different sub-orders.

1 19.(Original) The method of claim 16 further comprising scheduling the batches to be
2 printed in a predetermined ordering.

1 20.(Original) The method of claim 19 wherein each order includes image data and
2 control data.

1 21.(Original) The method of claim 20 wherein the control data includes at least one of
2 print parameters, user contact information, recipient information, payment information, and
3 message information.

1 22.(Original) The method of claim 21 wherein the image data includes pixel data for the
2 images in the order.

1 23.(Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the control data is used to control the
2 printing of the images.

1 24.(Original) The method of claim 20 further comprising, before printing each image:
2 correcting the image data for that image using information including the control data; and
3 calibrating the image data using information including the control data and at least one
4 characteristic of the printer on which the image is to be printed.

1 25.(Original) The method of claim 20 further comprising, for each batch, storing the
2 image data for the batch in a cache that is local to the selected printer for that batch.

1 26.(Original) The method of claim 25 further comprising, for each batch, placing the
2 control data for the batch in a queue associated with the selected printer for that batch.

1 27.(Original) The method of claim 26 further comprising, for each batch that is placed
2 in a queue, sending the image data associated with the images included in that batch to an image
3 processor associated with the selected printer for that batch.

1 28.(Original) The method of claim 27 wherein, for each batch that is placed in a queue,
2 sending the image data for that batch to the image processor associated with that queue before
3 the batch reaches the front of the queue.

1 29.(Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising verifying that an image print
2 was printed with the correct image.

1 30.(Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising checking the quality of the
2 image print.

1 31.(Original) The method of claim 13 further comprising:
2 combining the image prints from at least two sub-batches from the same sub-order; and
3 distributing the combined image prints to the recipient associated with the at least two
4 sub-orders.

1 32. (Original) The method of claim 1 further comprising printing a destination identifier
2 print that identifies the specified recipient for a corresponding sub-batch of image prints.

1 33. (Original) The method of claim 32 wherein the destination identifier print delimits
2 the corresponding sub-batch.

1 34. (Original) The method of claim 32 wherein printing the destination identifier print
2 comprises printing one or more of the following items: a shipping address, a recipient's name, a
3 print index, a bar code, a textual message and/or print re-ordering information.

1 35. (Currently Amended) A method of generating physical manifestations of digital
2 content on a plurality of output devices, the method comprising:

3 receiving an order specifying ~~one or more~~ a plurality of recipients and, for each specified
4 recipient, a set of digital content associated with that recipient;
5 for each recipient specified by the order, separating the digital content associated with the
6 recipient into at least one generatable unit of digital content having a contiguous run of prints for
7 the recipient; and
8 for each generatable unit of digital content, generating a physical manifestation of the
9 unit of digital content.

1 36.(Original) The method of claim 35 further comprising, for each generatable unit of
2 digital content, selecting an output device on which to generate a physical manifestation of the
3 unit of digital content.

1 37.(Original) The method of claim 36 wherein each generatable unit of digital content is
2 generated on the output device selected for that generatable unit.

1 38.(Original) The method of claim 35 further comprising distributing the physical
2 manifestations to their respective recipients.

1 39. (Original) The method of claim 35 wherein a set of digital content comprises one or
2 more digital images.

1 40. (Original) The method of claim 39 wherein the physical manifestation of the set of
2 digital content comprises photographic prints of the one or more digital images.

1 41.(Original) The method of claim 40 wherein the images in a generatable unit of
2 images have generation parameters that allow the generatable unit to be continuously generated.

1 42.(Original) The method of claim 41 wherein the print parameters include one or more
2 of print size, number of copies, and/or print finish.

1 43.(Currently Amended) A print distribution system comprising:

2 a plurality of printers;
3 a front-end computer sub-system for receiving an order specifying ~~one or more~~ a plurality
4 of recipients and, for each specified recipient, a set of one or more images associated with that
5 recipient; and
6 a scheduler, connected to the front-end computer sub-system and the plurality of printers,
7 that for each recipient specified by the order (a) separates the images associated with the
8 recipient into at least one printable unit of images to generate a contiguous run of prints for the
9 recipient, and (b) designates a printer on which each printable unit is to be printed.

1 44.(Original) The system of claim 43 wherein each image has associated print
2 parameters.

1 45.(Original) The system of claim 44 wherein the images in a printable unit of images
2 have print parameters that allow the printable unit to be continuously printed.

1 46. (Original) The system of claim 43 wherein images in a first recipient's image set
2 differ from images in a second recipient's image set.

1 47. (Original) The system of claim 43 wherein print parameters of a first recipient's
2 image set differ from print parameters of a second recipient's image set.

1 48. (Original) The system of claim 47 wherein print parameters include one or more of
2 print size, number of copies, and/or print finish.

1 49. (Original) The system of claim 47 wherein print parameters differ among images
2 within an image set.

1 50. (Original) The system of claim 49 wherein print parameters include one or more of
2 print size, number of copies, and/or print finish.

1 51.(Original) The system of claim 43 wherein each image set comprises an arbitrary
2 grouping of images designated by a user.

1 52.(Original) The system of claim 43 wherein the scheduler:
2 for each recipient, separates the images associated with the recipient into one or more
3 sub-orders; and
4 for each sub-order, separates the images associated with the sub-order into one or more
5 sub-batches, each sub-batch representing a printable unit.

1 53.(Original) The system of claim 52 wherein:
2 the front-end computer sub-system receives a plurality of orders; and
3 the scheduler, for each recipient, separates each order into one or more sub-orders and,
4 for each sub-order, separates each sub-order into one or more sub-batches.

1 54.(Original) The system of claim 53 wherein the scheduler assembles at least one batch
2 including one or more sub-batches, wherein each sub-batch can be continuously printed on the
3 same type of printer.

1 55.(Original) The system of claim 54 wherein the scheduler schedules the batches to be
2 printed in a predetermined ordering.

1 56.(Original) The system of claim 55 wherein the scheduler uses a global scheduling
2 algorithm.

1 57.(Original) The system of claim 55 wherein the scheduler uses a just-in-time
2 scheduling algorithm.

1 58.(Original) The system of claim 55 further comprising a plurality of line controllers,
2 each line controller being associated with a printer and having a queue for storing the batches
3 until they are printed by the printer.

1 59.(Original) The system of claim 58 wherein each order includes image data and
2 control data.

1 60.(Original) The system of claim 59 wherein the control data includes at least one of
2 print parameters, user contact information, recipient information, payment information, and
3 message information.

1 61.(Original) The system of claim 60 wherein the image data includes pixel data for the
2 images in the order.

1 62.(Original) The system of claim 61 further comprising an image cache local to the
2 scheduler for caching the image data.

1 63.(Original) The system of claim 58 further comprising an image processor associated
2 with at least one of the line controllers for processing the image data and at least a portion of the
3 control data prior to printing the image.

1 64.(Original) The system of claim 63 wherein the image processor further comprises
2 image processor software in a computer-readable medium comprising instructions for causing
3 the image processor to perform the following operations:
4 correct the image data using information including the control data; and
5 calibrate the image data using information including the control data and at least one
6 characteristic of the designated printer.

1 65.(Original) The system of claim 64 wherein the image processor software further
2 comprises instructions for causing the image processor to generate a destination identifier image,
3 wherein the destination identifier image can be used to print a destination identifier print that
4 identifies the specified recipient for a corresponding sub-batch of image prints and is generated
5 from at least the sub-batch's control data.

1 66.(Original) The system of claim 65 wherein the destination identifier image for each
2 sub-batch is generated from the sub-batch's control data and image data.

1 67.(Original) The system of claim 64 wherein the image cache includes software in a
2 computer-readable medium comprising instructions for causing the image cache to perform the
3 following operation:
4 in response to a message from the scheduler indicating that the scheduler has sent control
5 data for a batch to the line controller, send the image data for that batch to the image processor
6 associated with that queue.

1 68.(Original) The system of claim 43 further comprising a backprinter for backprinting
2 at least one image print.

1 69.(Original) The system of claim 68 wherein the backprinter backprints non-image
2 information on each image print.

1 70.(Original) The system of claim 69 wherein the non-image information includes at
2 least one of an image number associated with the image, a printable unit number associated with
3 the printable unit from which the image print was printed, reorder information, a bar code, and a
4 message.

1 71.(Original) The system of claim 70 wherein the message is an advertisement.

1 72.(Original) The system of claim 71 wherein the bar code encodes at least one of an
2 audio message, the image number associated with the image, and the printable unit number
3 associated with the printable unit from which the image print was printed.

1 73.(Original) The system of claim 59 further comprising a digital camera for capturing
2 data about at least one of the image prints.

1 74.(Original) The system of claim 73 wherein the camera is a low-resolution camera.

1 75.(Original) The system of claim 73 wherein the captured data is used to verify that the
2 an image print was printed with the correct image data.

1 76.(Original) The system of claim 73 wherein the captured data is used to check the
2 quality of the image print.

1 77.(Original) The system of claim 43 further comprising an inverter that inverts each
2 image print prior to backprinting.

1 78.(Original) The system of claim 77 further comprising a curl reduction equipment that
2 reduces curling of the image print prior to backprinting.

1 79.(Original) The system of claim 78 wherein the curl-reduction equipment uses suction
2 to reduce curling of the image print.

1 80.(Original) The system of claim 79 wherein the curling-reduction equipment device
2 includes a vacuum table.

1 81.(Original) The system of claim 77 further comprising an alignment device that aligns
2 each image print prior to backprinting.

1 82.(Original) The system of claim 81 wherein the alignment device includes:
2 an alignment wall against which each image print is to be aligned prior to backprinting;
3 and
4 a skew conveyor that receives each image print after the image print has been printed and
5 moves the image print towards the alignment wall as the skew conveyor conveys the image print
6 to the backprinter.

1 83.(Original) The system of claim 82 further comprising an alignment sensor positioned
2 laterally inward from the alignment wall that detects whether a portion of the image print is
3 positioned immediately beneath the alignment sensor.

1 84.(Original) The system of claim 83 wherein the alignment sensor is a photosensor that
2 optically senses the presence of the image print.

1 85.(Original) The system of claim 43 further comprising a conveyor on which image
2 prints are stacked after printing.

1 86.(Original) The system of claim 85 further comprising a controller, connected to the
2 conveyor, that advances the conveyor so that a new stack can be stacked after all the image prints
3 in a printable unit have been stacked on the conveyor.

1 87.(Original) The system of claim 86 further comprising a plurality of bins, positioned
2 on the conveyor, so that the image prints for a printable unit are stacked in a bin.

1 88.(Original) The system of claim 87 wherein the bin comprises:
2 a base for supporting the bin when the bin is placed on a surface of the conveyor;
3 a first bottom wall connected to the base so that the first wall has a pitch incline with
4 respect to the surface of the conveyor; and
5 a second bottom wall connected to a first end of the first wall at one end, the second wall
6 and first wall forming an angle so that image prints received in the bin tend to stack on the first
7 bottom wall with an edge of each image print registering with the second bottom wall.

1 89.(Original) The system of claim 52 further comprising a storage device in which one
2 or more sub-batches can be stored for later combination with other sub-batches.